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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 THE HAGUE 003199

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SENSITIVE

STATE FOR G, INL, INL/T, EUR/UBI, EUR/ERA  
ONDCP FOR Cسيسون  
DEA FOR OFE  
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BRUSSELS FOR USEU, LEGATT

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: NEW DUTCH MEASURES AGAINST COCAINE TRAFFICKING AT  
SCHIPHOL AIRPORT GO INTO EFFECT

REF: (A) STATE 298019; (B) THE HAGUE 2527

[11.](#) (U) SUMMARY: Following mid-December approval by the Dutch Parliament, Justice Minister Donner instituted a crackdown on drug trafficking through Schiphol airport from the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. Initial results (120 arrests/400+ passengers turned away or failed to show up) indicate more the scope of the problem than signs of successful interdiction. There is considerable skepticism, including our own, whether the measures will solve the problem. The Minister's efforts are complicated by recent allegations by an Aruban drug dealer that members of Dutch Customs and ground personnel at Schiphol Airport are involved in the drug trade. END SUMMARY.

[12.](#) (U) On December 10, the Dutch Parliament approved Justice Minister Donner's plan to "close down" Amsterdam's Schiphol airport to cocaine smuggling from the Caribbean. An estimated 20,000-40,000 kilos of cocaine, destined primarily for the European market, are smuggled annually through Schiphol. Donner hopes to achieve 100% interdiction of the drugs coming into Schiphol on targeted "high-risk" flights from the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. The new measures (reftel B) subject all passengers on such flights to lengthy, time consuming and intrusive procedures. Smugglers carrying a "small amount" of drugs will not be prosecuted, but will be returned to their place of origin. (Press speculation suggests the "small amount" is three kilos, but the Justice Ministry refuses to confirm this for reasons of "investigation and prosecution.") Airlines have agreed to ban those caught in possession of drugs from returning to the Netherlands on future flights from the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba.

[13.](#) (U) The plan went into effect on December 11 and the Justice Ministry (MOJ) has released the results for the first five days. 120 drug couriers were arrested. Following the seizure of drugs, 31 smugglers were released without a summons and returned. The remaining 89 cases are being investigated or prosecuted. In addition, 104 potential passengers were turned away by the airlines and 375 passengers did not show up for their flights.

[14.](#) (U) Minister Donner told the Second Chamber during its consideration of his plan that Customs and military police (Royal Marechaussee) at Schiphol would be expanded by 260 persons for an indefinite period of time. The government also plans to expand the Schiphol CargoHarc Intervention team and to monitor information from the Disclosure Office on Unusual Transactions (MOT) for money transfers between the Netherlands and countries where drugs are produced or trafficked.

[15.](#) (SBU) MOJ officials confirmed to Global/Narcotics Coordinator there was no time limit for these "experimental" steps. They will continue until the goal of stopping drug smuggling from the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba is achieved - or "until the problem becomes more manageable." They will also be applied continuously instead of sporadically as initially planned.

[16.](#) (SBU) These officials also acknowledged that if the

measures are successful, drug traffickers will likely search for other routes to get the cocaine into their Amsterdam distribution systems (using Schiphol flights originating from airports in other Caribbean or South American countries) or will bypass the Netherlands entirely - creating a problem for the Netherlands' European neighbors. They shared with post a draft letter Minister Donner is preparing to send to his EU colleagues, which states "the tightened-up policy in the Netherlands may have relocation effects and lead to the use of different routes." In a year end/farewell interview (he is retiring), Royal Marechaussee commander-in-chief Major General Neisingh defended Donner's efforts even as he admitted drug traffickers will divert their deliveries to other European airports if Donner's efforts are successful. He said a Europe-wide approach to the problem is needed.

17. (U) Although Parliament approved the plan (with the support of the main opposition PvdA), many politicians remain opposed. The LPF and VVD parties believe Donner's plan is not strict enough because it will let certain drug couriers go free. The press is also voicing criticism. The Algemeen Dagblad argued that "the Cabinet is facing what seems to be an unsolvable problem. By imprisoning the traffickers you do not hurt the criminals whom the traffickers work for. While it makes sense to thoroughly check every passenger and seize the drugs they carry, it does not make sense that traffickers at Schiphol are not prosecuted while those in other parts of the country are." De Telegraaf claimed the new policy will lead to drug smugglers switching to flights from South America since these will not be subject to such scrutiny. Donner, however, claims that checks can be transferred to other routes on short notice.

18. (SBU) The Justice Ministry recognizes that simply attacking the courier problem at Schiphol is not sufficient by itself. Arie Ijzerman, MOJ Deputy Director General for International Criminal Affairs and Drugs Policy, told DEA, State and DoJ officials in Washington during a late November 2003 visit the Dutch government was considering efforts at stopping drugs at the source - in Colombia and in the Caribbean. According to the Ministry's "Fifth Progress Report on Drug Trafficking through Schiphol," which provided background in support of Donner's new measures, the Dutch government plans to raise investments in expanding the law enforcement capacity in the Antilles and to intensify cooperation with local authorities there. The Dutch plan to commit additional funds to improve Coast Guard operations there. Minister Donner will be in the Antilles the first week of January to discuss these measures. He said he wants to start similar consultations with the Surinamese government as well.

19. (SBU) COMMENT: The Dutch developed the Schiphol Action Plan at the beginning of 2002 in response to heavy criticism of a previous Justice Minister's decision to let drug couriers caught with small amounts of drugs in Schiphol go free. The Dutch government poured 90 million Euros annually into the Plan which increased the number of customs and military police personnel at Schiphol, set up a special court at the airport, expanded judicial staffing to handle the increased work load and increased prison capacity to deal with drug couriers. This led to increased drug seizures and prosecutions. These new steps by Minister Donner indicate the government recognizes that even the considerable previous efforts have not been adequate to stop the flow of cocaine through Schiphol.

10. (SBU) COMMENT CONT'D: As the Ambassador indicated to Minister Donner (reftel B), post has concerns about the long-term viability of Donner's new steps. They require significant manpower resources and are expensive. Failing to prosecute drug couriers sends the wrong message and avoids the problem; it does not solve it. In addition, the Dutch continue to refuse to revise their prohibition on the use of informants in drug investigations. They also use asset forfeiture rules only sparingly, limiting their ability to harm the drug trade. While we wish the Dutch success, we are skeptical the new plan will achieve its goal of 100% interdiction. The plan, however, is now operational. We will monitor its effectiveness, paying particular attention (1) how the remaining 89 cases from the first 5 days are investigated and prosecuted; (2) the success of Donner's efforts to take the fight to the Caribbean; and (3) whether drug smugglers start switching to using less-scrutinized South American routes.

11. (U) COMMENT CONT'D: Donner's efforts to stop drugs going through Schiphol are now complicated by recent assertions by an Aruban drug dealer claiming certain Dutch Customs, Royal Marechaussee and ground crew personnel at Schiphol are involved in the drug trade. General Neisingh said he would investigate the allegations concerning the military police and the Royal Marechaussee acknowledged to the media on December 29 that an internal investigation into operations

at Schiphol had already been underway for several months. MOJ contacts refused to comment and said the official responsible for the matter was away for the holidays. Post will continue to follow this matter and report on developments. END COMMENT.

Russel